Why we're announcing a new independent tendency in Socialist Alternative - An Open Letter from Longstanding Comrades

- Reject sectarianism and isolation
- Fight for class struggle, the dual task, and a healthy democratic culture

---

As we write, the International Socialist Alternative (ISA) is undergoing the final stages of another split – virtually splitting in half – after a prolonged, toxic crisis. This follows a series of crises and splits since its separation from the old Committee for a Workers International (CWI) and its founding in 2020. In our opinion, this is an expression of ISA's very own "poly-crisis" of perspectives, theory, politics, and ingrained undemocratic internal culture.

After five years, ISA has not corrected the democratic deficit carried over from the CWI – the problems have worsened. The ISA's leadership has been paralyzed for years and trust in it is beginning to collapse. All of these developments are related to the politics and perspectives that ISA leaders have advanced.

A refoundation of ISA is necessary and we are writing with the aim of building support for that idea. The branches and comrades in and around SA represent a marxist footprint with positive traditions and achievements built over several decades, with a significant contribution to make. As we look ahead, there are many good reasons to be positive about rebuilding the socialist and workers' movements internationally. Members need to work together to find a productive way forward out of this disaster.

An aggressive re-orientation of perspectives and tasks is required, as well as an internal revolution in the democratic culture of the organization. This path is not being offered by either side of the current ISA leadership. The US leadership in particular, and its sectarian trajectory, carry a great deal of blame for where ISA has landed. A new direction will require drastic changes in the leadership and democratic renewal of the organization. Refoundation means we want to dialogue with comrades and help create a process through which our program, strategy, and internal life can be set on more stable and clear foundations after the recent period of crisis. The end result may look like a renewal of SA, a new organization entirely, or even, due to the profoundly destructive approach of the leadership for an extended period, a revolutionary network.

Ours is an independent position. Below we outline the basis for more realistic perspectives, how to begin to do real, grounded work – especially in the labor movement – without sectarian pretensions, and ideas for a new democratic culture. The ISA disaster, so soon after the breakup of the CWI, requires a serious examination and reflection. We need to pioneer new ideas and practices for how to build a new workers' international.

Please reach out to discuss with us at *RefoundationTendencyISA@gmail.com*

The Immediate Cause of the ISA Split

Before the safeguarding case came about in mid-2022, the ISA leadership was in the process of dividing into its current factional deadlock. Earlier that year, multiple issues were building up and

the leadership was unable to organize any kind of democratic, transparent debate that actually involved the members. By the beginning of 2023, before the future International Faction had any knowledge of the case, US IE members were reporting *paralysis* in the leadership bodies. In other words, **when the safeguarding case entered the scene, a power struggle for control of ISA was already underway behind the backs of the membership.**

Whatever one thinks of the International Faction to Defend Safeguarding, Socialist Feminism, and Internal Democracy, the record the debate has produced indicates to us that the [redacted] EC and its supporters worked to hide their actions from relevant international structures. Once the case came under dispute, they also acted with determination to restrict review. The fact-finding and review efforts of the Faction must be commended, as it is obvious that none of the "mistakes" the [redacted] EC now recognizes would have come to light without these efforts. The term "cover up" in the current debate is quite loaded, but seems justified.

After being forced by the Faction to defend themselves in the [redacted] section, the [redacted] EC have run meetings stating that "mistakes were made" and "lessons have been learned." The [redacted] EC presented these apologies to the [redacted] section and, basically in the same breath, used them to legitimize polarized political attacks against the IC minority, demonizing them as part of a bureaucratic effort to drive them out. The priority has been protecting their *prestige and the control* of a thin ISA Majority over truth and the actual health of the organization.

The IC members on the [redacted] EC should resign or be recalled. If we take the task of restoring trust in ISA seriously, it is not possible to entrust these tasks to the same [redacted] EC that made these disastrous mistakes. These comrades should resign or – if they refuse – be recalled from leadership and continue to contribute to the organization in new capacities, as ordinary members.

As to the International Faction: we are very skeptical of their intentions and methods. Ultimately, **we think both sides bear responsibility for the disastrous way these debates have been carried out, demonstrating a toxic culture of fighting for control rather than pursuing the need for a refoundation of the struggle for socialism and internationalism.**

The [redacted] EC has claimed that the Faction has "weaponized" the case. This is largely true. **The Faction's assertion that the international polarization emanates "solely" from the safeguarding case is patently false.** *The Faction's open aim is to discredit the IC Majority and revoke its majority control of ISA structures by demanding the removal of IC members involved in the case;* however, given the wider context, it is *not* credible to claim this effort is "solely" about the case.

Even before they formally declared a Faction, the comrades made the decision to hold all other issues hostage to the safeguarding debate, which was a decisive choice to polarize the situation. Although we sympathize with the anger of many Faction members towards the IC Majority, the Faction made a choice to boycott the *membership* of the sections that were

represented by the IC Majority by refusing to attend NCs or the [redacted] 2023 national convention – *even though the membership had no knowledge of the case.* The Faction thus contributed its fair share to making this “debate” a total mess when it actually came to the members.

Politically, the international minority is an eclectic bloc that holds together disagreements and debates on different issues such as slogans and orientation for the war in Ukraine, confusing “identity politics,” Gaza slogans, and the transitional program. These need to be debated and tested in a way that is currently impossible under the undemocratic culture and regime of ISA.

When the international debate came to the US, we consistently pushed back against the polarized and denunciatory atmosphere promoted by the US EC and urged a different method of debate. We have disagreements with positions of the minority on the issues, but also disagree with the IC Majority’s “objectivist” point of view – “i.e. the inclination to prostrate before objective historical tendencies, as if they operated independently from and unaffected by the class struggle.” (see Cedric’s critique of IC Majority in IMB 29).

The Ukraine war debate in ISA has touched on serious issues. We support a policy of socialists not taking sides in vicious inter-imperialist conflicts *and* developing meaningful transitional demands in different countries as the situation evolves. However, from the start, this debate was turned into a farce. Instead of an educational, clarifying, patient debate to address disagreements, leading members demanded the Russian section remove all offending content from public view, paralyzing the discussion with organizational ultimatums.

On socialist feminism, we have concerns about concessions to identity politics. However, after nearly six years (!) the organization has not found a way to debate these topics. In our view, these complex issues require *exploratory* debate and discussion. Perhaps a different way could have been found if different ideas were acknowledged and openly and honestly *tested out,* for further comradely review.

The IC Majority *and* Minority have maintained a very bad record on being able to organize productive debates. Let’s not forget that both sides of this debate collaborated together in 2021 to force out the TIDU opposition and were largely complicit in the democratic deficit and rot of the old CWI.

The Background World Objective Situation

Of course the primary reason for the crises in ISA stem from the complications and challenges of the objective situation. While ISA leaders have made much of the strength of the organization’s analysis – “the organization’s greatest achievement” according to some IE members – these claims don’t stand up to serious scrutiny.

Virtually all trends in the international Trotskyist movement and even the serious capitalist press recognize we are facing a "new period" ahead with new complexities and a prolonged period of

challenges for capitalism. However, ISA leaders' founding central perspective – of a coming leap in consciousness and huge growth for our forces to …10,000 – has been proven wrong. What remains is the "New Cold War" and "Age of Disorder" general analysis, which is *not* "unique," as some ISA leaders claim. It is actually discussed in detail in the serious business press. Further hampering perspectives, ISA is without a footprint in critical countries like Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Turkey, and holds a minimal presence in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Our epoch is marked by multiple crises of world capitalism. Political instability, the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, raging upheavals in Africa and Asia, the wider inter-imperialist confrontation between China and the US, the climate crisis, economic crises and stagnation, and uprisings by women, young people and the oppressed, as well as class struggles across the globe, are features of instability ahead.

This picture needs to be combined with the serious internal crisis of the working class. With small exceptions, for the first time in a century the working class is virtually without political representation. Successful attempts at building mass or semi-mass left forces can be found only in a tiny number of countries, but generally the left has lost the momentum it had gained in previous periods or is effectively marginalized.

We have seen some of the biggest mass movements in world history burst forth and then dissipate. The rise of progressive ideas such as feminism, anti-racism, environmentalism and internationalism that have found expressions in several countries go hand-in-hand with the rise of the far right, a generally low political consciousness, and, most importantly, the absence of mass left formations or any forms of independent class organizations in the vast majority of countries. This appears to be a contradiction, as periods of transition and system crisis should pave the way for working-class, radical, and socialist ideas to expand their influence.

It cannot be underlined enough: far from a simple crisis of "leadership", we are confronted by a deep-rooted crisis of consciousness and organization of the working class. The workers' movement has suffered severe setbacks for decades and is in the process of a slow and painful recovery. ***The fact is,*** **there is no substantive advanced, activist worker layer fighting for a socialist world. It needs to be patiently rebuilt.** Many of these points were explored by earlier documents, especially those produced in the TIDU debates in ISA. We invite comrades to read them. (IMB 15 on the "Federalism" debate & IMB 12 on the "Neoliberalism" debate).

In a blur of "optimism," ISA leaders have continually overstated the advanced layer, or evaded the issue. When forced to acknowledge that it is lacking, they have anticipated its imminent arrival, where "earth-shattering events" will inexorably lead to its re-emergence. With no exaggeration, these comrades were initially excited by the Ukraine war because they saw an upshot: "war is the mother of revolution." ISA has demonstrated the price to be paid for hyped-up, "objectivist" perspectives. A serious organization needs to be guided by reality-based

perspectives, without self-serving fantasies, in order to be involved in the rebuilding process of the advanced layer.

The Subjective Failures of the old CWI & New Ideas for Internationalism

In the last years before the crisis in the CWI (beginning late 2018), the CWI was the most significant Trotskyist international. It had a presence in 45 countries, on all continents, and a number of sections played an important role on a national level, as well as in important international campaigns.

Today, these forces are scattered, fragmented and in crisis. The initial triple split of the CWI (ISA; the Izquierda Revolucionaria tendency in the Spanish state, Portugal, and Mexico; and those that remained in the CWI) was soon followed by very serious internal problems and more splits in its biggest successor, ISA. **But the negative features of the objective situation alone are not sufficient to explain this train wreck.**

In the initial split of the CWI and in the crises that developed in the ISA, there emerged important political differences on several issues including socialist feminism and climate change. Differences also arose on the characterization of our epoch: the debate around whether we are seeing "the end of neoliberalism" or the alleged "de-globalization" of the world system of capitalism; over-optimistic perspectives for the class struggle post-COVID; and our attitude towards identity politics, among others.

It is completely normal for such differences to exist in a revolutionary organization, reflecting pressures of different political situations internationally. But none of these differences justify the splits and toxic atmosphere that exists. While statutes nominally allow for democratic debates, the actual experience (shown again by the approaching split with the International Faction, but also debates here in the US) is that differences are treated with extreme hostility, suspicion, near-automatic allegations of ulterior motives, and sharp accusations.

Something is very obviously broken, and this **requires reexamining the *real* ideas of Bolshevism and democratic centralism** – not the caricature that is currently practiced. We do not believe these disasters had to happen in this way. These problems require serious thinking that examines all aspects of democratic practice. We also need new concepts for how an international revolutionary project can be built in today's world.

In our view, the future mass international can only take the character of different revolutionary forces coming together, where political differences and different traditions will have to be respected, tested and debated. The character of the internal regime of an international organization is crucial. Political differences between revolutionaries will always spring up reflecting disparate situations, contradictions and new tactical turns. **It must be possible to air the internal differences in the open, without causing splits.** Splits are justified when there is a breach of fundamental principles – and even then they should happen with a view of educating the movement, not in a rush. The Bolshevik party and the early

Communist International, before the Stalinist degeneration, give us many useful examples of public open debates and democratic practices.

Today we have the emergence and, in effect, a *reconstitution* of a new working class with new features, such as a new mass industrial proletariat in China, India and Asia, the upsurge of women and anti-oppression struggles, the mass precariat, the entry of new, formerly middle-class layers like tech workers or doctors into the working class, and the mass migrations of millions that are taking place across the globe. **A new International cannot be made by fiat but will rise out of these new forces and their struggles for solidarity and socialism as a way out of the crises of capitalist decay, poverty, racism, reaction and wars.**

A point sorely missed by ISA is that the genius of Marx and Engels was to draw scientific conclusions from the instinctive and spontaneous upsurges, revolts and aspirations of the proletariat, while at the same time being *against* the idea of foisting ideas artificially on the working class – unlike classic sectarians and utopians who see the world as a "school" with themselves as the schoolmasters. As Marx states in the Manifesto: “The Communists… do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement... the communists are distinguished from other working-class parties by only this... they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.”

Contrary to myth, the First International did not emerge out of Marx's head, but from the initiative and self-activity of workers' organizations, political refugees, the spontaneous movement of solidarity in England against slavery during the US Civil War, as well as several embryonic left, nationalist, utopian, and anarchist movements in a number of countries alongside scientific socialism. Marx and Engels approached the challenges of their time and the instinctive movements of the working class with patience, humility and tactfulness in order to keep the flag of the International flying and become the specter “haunting” the ruling classes in their day.

Real Internal Democracy & How to Build Cadre

Democracy is not a secondary matter that serious revolutionaries can downplay in favor of “politics,” which is a feature of the culture of ISA. In the present period, there is no other way to convince the emerging, fresh militant forces of mass movements to join a socialist political formation, *especially young people wary of bureaucratic methods*, without a deep-rooted, democratic internal culture.

Furthermore, the monumental task of *assisting in* the process of rebuilding the labor and socialist movement virtually from scratch, developing mass revolutionary parties, and establishing a socialist society cannot be fulfilled by any organization which is accustomed to top-down structures or repeating formulas. The *footsoldiers* for the battle for socialism need, by necessity, to be independent thinkers, innovative, and politically confident. They should have the training to exercise true democracy and link this to providing leadership to mass movements. All of this also relates to the question of who is a “cadre” in the organization. In the US more recently “cadre” has been largely degraded to the level of formal positions, e.g. branch

organizers, NC member, fulltimer, etc. This approach limits the potential of our many great comrades, and misses the essential quality of **what cadre needs to be: a socialist activist with actual roots and experience in building and leading in the workers movement.** They should be developing their own marxist understanding through study, testing in action, and democratic debates. They form the backbone of a well-functioning internal democracy. Our present model has seen the structures of the organization suffer, while empowering cliques running on fumes of unearned political authority.

We believe in democratic centralism, but we see that the organization practices a distortion of this concept. Let's reiterate this: **Centralism is *for fighting the boss*.** It is not a self-serving vehicle for stifling debates, micro-managing, and imposing top-down control. Furthermore, the current historical moment requires immensely more democracy in the balance of democracy and centralism. There are bookshelves full of new research from Paul Le Blanc, Lars Lih, Pierre Broue, etc. detailing the actual practical experience of the Bolsheviks that refutes the current practices in SA, such as the idea that differing opinions cannot and should not be published openly (with some exceptions). We need a true **refoundation of our practice of democratic centralism.**

The Sectarian Drift of the US Section towards a "Micro-party" Concept

Despite successful steps (such as the election and the important work of Kshama Sawant in the City Council Office in Seattle, the $15 campaigns, the Amazon Tax, etc.), our isolation has been difficult for the organization. Of course it has deepened in recent years with the downturn of the movement, a "lull", and a general crisis for the socialist left. In the face of this, whether out of ignorance or out of misguided arrogance – e.g. the belief of EC majority members that there were "no objective limits to our growth" – **the current leadership seems to be turning increasingly toward what can be called the "micro-party" approach.**

The micro-party perspective asserts that building a small revolutionary group is, with this or that qualification or in the fine print, the same thing as constructing a revolutionary party. This notion starts with the generally correct assertion that there cannot be a successful socialist revolution without a revolutionary party and extrapolates that one's own particular organization/tradition holds the red thread of authentic marxism. Therefore, building the organization, and even defending the prestige of its leadership, becomes *the key* to constructing a future mass revolutionary party. There is a slippage here from generally correct concepts to idealist schemas that supersede reality. Combined with "objectivism," SA has been gradually adopting a messianic self-image, raising the group above the rest of the movement, typical of sectarianism and idealism.

While many sects in the movement have been known for this approach, the old CWI was historically – though imperfectly – grounded in the idea that a mass revolutionary party and International would mainly emerge from explosive movements of the working class. This notion steers us away from sectarian self-declarations that Lenin characterized correctly as "clowning."

It is true that the perpetrators of the micro-party fallacy in our organization, when cornered, will produce all the fine-print qualifications. For instance, there has been much discussion of "preserving the dual task" in SA. But when you review our recent history, it is as if the critical tasks – *the dual tasks* of being involved in rebuilding the critical infrastructure that can nurture emerging working class self-mobilization and self-empowerment – have been dropped. Read documents such as BK's reply to KMcL closely (IMB 22B and IMB 19 respectively): the critical question of how a mass workers' party can be built is in practice reduced to building our small group, a substitute, a "micro-party."

Reaffirming Dual Tasks & the United Front Method

We live at a time when, unlike in the 1930s, '60s or '70s, **the most critical contribution of a socialist organization is to organically assist in the rebuilding of a new working-class vanguard of hundreds of thousands** infused and inspired by the ideals of a new, democratic, and socialist alternative to capitalism. This means we have to work with others! Cadre development will happen through conscious and organic cooperation with and within emerging workers' struggles and social movements, not just through intervening and criticizing them with the sole aim of additional recruits. In order for our ideas to be taken up by these struggles and movements we need to be active participants – comrades of those who are fighting, not just critics. These ideas describe our "dual tasks."

We need to allow ourselves the time and resources to develop roots in the working class and actual links with other organizations that are doing real work in the class and against oppression, while patiently defending a socialist program. **This requires thoughtful, innovative, and genuine application of united front methods. We will need *testing and concretizing* of our approach to address the political issues *in this period* with its unique features.** Our regular activity should be related to a wide range of new struggles and movements of both the working class and youth, nationally or internationally.

We must think about these activities outside abstract ideas of the transitional program. When Trotsky wrote in 1938, there really was *a mass* advanced layer of workers and socialists in society consciously striving for an alternative to capitalism and fascism. Today's real work is not advanced by devising "bold demands" *a priori*, or bringing a clever verbal "bridge" of ideas not grounded in reality to a struggle. Indeed, the period requires patiently listening to and learning from real workers' struggles to understand what issues to raise, and how to advance them based on their experience. We do this as open socialists linking our work to an overall socialist and internationalist perspective.

These notions put everything in a different light and perspective from that of the "micro-party" approach that is insinuated in the US organization. In more practical terms, this model has repeatedly returned to the idea that if somehow we devise a "model intervention" that highlights our "correct ideas," then the advanced layer will spring into being. If the movement's leadership is "holding things back," then all we need is to find a way to announce to workers our "bold demands and a strategy to win."

It reminds us of the idealistic beliefs of Utopian socialists and Kautskyites that socialism was brought to the masses by either enlightened messiahs or the socialist intellectuals. **We emphasize instead Marx and Lenin's central theme: It is the task of ordinary workers as a class to fight for their self-emancipation.**

For worker members in responsible positions or active in the workers movement, the leadership's sectarian direction has left them increasingly isolated and out of sync. We reproduce below a recent (April 2024) contribution by a worker comrade who organized his Starbucks workplace. His observations and conclusions illustrate the real-life effects of the sectarian drift and toxic internal culture of the organization and stand as a concrete indictment of the recent politics of the US EC.

> ... the perspective at the beginning of the Starbucks campaign was way overblown, with people making comparisons to 1934, suggesting the existing leadership was the only real obstacle to a massive explosion in labor, and thinking we could be the ones to ignite this explosion and use that as basically a shortcut to gain authority in the labor movement. This perspective was then wildly overcorrected when the campaign was suddenly declared dead just a few months later. The reality was that the campaign was neither a massive explosion nor a dud, but something more complicated, a slow chain reaction which our approach was unable to address. These rigid perspectives overestimated consciousness at the beginning, but then totally dismissed it, failing to account for the way it could dialectically develop over time. There was not a ready-made advanced layer ready to overthrow the leadership on day one, but this is something that can slowly coalesce and push the movement forward along with changes in the objective situation...
>
> These wrong perspectives helped justify a sectarian approach from most comrades, where we prioritized the short-term interests of our organization over the strength of the movement and class as a whole. Members were asked to take jobs but told it would only be for a couple months, which is not much time to establish yourself and get to know people let alone lead a strong union effort. The idea that we could seriously influence the campaign this way was incredibly arrogant and based on an inflated view of our organization's weight and the strength of our slogans... Just a few months into the campaign, our intervention was basically an embarrassment and a disaster, and most of the leadership never wanted to think about it again.
>
> ... Now contrast this sectarian approach with what I did, which was patiently organizing, building relationships within the union, looking to collaboratively introduce ideas alongside workers, rather than trying to influence events from the outside. This approach allowed me to successfully organize my workplace, which the leadership initially celebrated. Of course since then I've run into the obvious difficulties everyone runs into, like workplace turnover, burnout, and other challenges of the objective situation. ... I did the best I could with the hand I was dealt and I still feel like overall I've done good work in a very tough situation. And there's only so much I can do as one person, but if more comrades had taken this approach, things could have been different—we could have organized more stores and played a more significant role in

> the campaign. This is the approach I think we should take in labor work more generally going forward.
>
> ... I tried to make these criticisms leading up to the [national] convention... [another worker comrade] reached out to talk about proposing an alternative delegate slate to better represent our labor work at the convention, because he was having similar frustrations with his work [organizing at a supermarket chain], but he pulled out at the last minute and then resigned from the organization soon afterward, and this was disappointing but honestly I can't blame him. I gave a version of this contribution at the city committee where I was dog-piled on with all three [local executive committee] members completely throwing me under the bus with blatant mischaracterizations of what happened to turn other comrades against me, and I considered writing a document after that but the environment was just way too toxic and I ended up just getting really depressed and not coming to branch for a few months.
>
> ... This happens over and over again with comrades in similar situations getting completely mistreated and isolated by the leadership, and then quietly leaving. Often these are dedicated worker comrades who are punished for doing good work which the leadership is sectarian towards. Yes it would be better if people stayed longer and defended their ideas, but the methods of the leadership are so infuriating, and the democratic culture is so suffocating, that many end up sadly deciding there's no point. I don't know how many times this has to happen before people realize the problem might have something to do with the organization's culture, and not just with every one of those individual comrades who have left. My loyalty is first and foremost to the working class and fighting for a better world, not to Socialist Alternative..."

Making Changes

As we write, the politics of Socialist Alternative are up in the air. Although hardly acknowledged openly, it is widely felt in the top US leadership that the perspectives and methods of the last few years have hit a brick wall. The leadership has been moving away from "optimism" for nearly a year, but what will replace it? So far zig-zags, disarray, and paralysis have filled the vacuum. Now the devastating resignations of Kshama and seven other comrades from leadership have detonated *a new factional crisis*. There were already tell-tale signs of sharp debates taking place on the US EC, and an evolving demoralization of the full timers with several announcing "steps back" or resignations. The NC has sent one email that lists a wide range of topics apparently under debate.

The untapped creativity of the membership can take us forward. There are indeed comrades and a few branches that *genuinely try to develop a better internal culture* for the organization. However, we think there is also an unhealthy culture of leadership demanding that any disagreements go through the largely degraded and increasingly disoriented "official" structures of the organization. Each member has a full right to discuss informally and, if necessary, formally with any other member or group of members in the organization. Branches are the basic unit of democracy in the organization, and should explore new ideas through internal

discussion. We will work to publish this letter in an official members' bulletin, but we will also circulate it through the branches and to individual members.

We will be taking more steps to get organized to defend our point of view. Below we detail more specific ideas for changes in our approach. We hope comrades reach out to discuss with us.

Refound our democratic culture and develop new leadership

There needs to be a reassessment of our leadership structures and a change in the internal political culture. We need a National Committee that is dominated by worker comrades rather than staff and those without roots in the workers movement. Leadership bodies need to cease acting as "closed fists" behind closed doors and encourage the active involvement of the members.

The branches need to be restored as the basic unit of democracy and organization in SA. They need autonomy (i.e. having a real choice and voice in directing local efforts) and freedom to integrate into real struggles. This is not at all a negation of centralism but empowerment to make decisions, flexibly apply common decisions, and not constantly be weighed down with a top-down, staff-driven approach.

Finally, free discussion means free – **yes even horizontal and even public! –** discussion, as well as structured debates and discussions at all levels of the organization. There should be no criminalization or ostracizing of tendencies, factions or those with different views.

Reorient our labor work

We need a grounded, united-front approach in the labor movement, highlighting **solidarity** and a fighting program. Solidarity allows us to bring direct, meaningful assistance to those in struggle while creating connections through which to raise our politics. We should explore the idea of building active labor/worker solidarity networks in different cities.

This notion connects with our *Workers Strike Back* (WSB) banner. Since its inception we have been open to this idea as a better, more transitional way to engage with labor. But in our view not much has been done with this banner after a year and half. What is it? We think this banner (or a similar labor banner) could be oriented to become an actual, broad organization built with real commitment from workers outside of SA. There is no benefit in having it operate as a "different name" for SA. This will go nowhere and is in danger of becoming a "front" that worker activists want nothing to do with. Internally and externally we should project a *genuine* desire to work with others to rebuild the forces of the labor movement on a socialist, democratic and radical foundation and have this spirit guide a refounding of WSB.

Instead of appearing as counterposed, WSB should be seen as complementary to a serious reorientation toward Labor Notes, union oppositions, and Labor DSA – despite all their political

weaknesses – to engage them in a united-front method rebuilding of the labor movement, in a spirit of solidarity, without preconditions and without sectarian hangups.

The recent Labor Notes conference in April 2024 with almost 5,000 attending was a missed opportunity. Though tickets sold out early, what prevented us from quickly registering as many members as possible to attend and help build the embryonic signs of revival of a new activist labor base? (In a stunning SA EC zig-zag, they went from the hype of a couple of years ago, to being currently *paralyzed* by a gloomy semi-propagandist approach, unable to see the small but very positive signs of labor revival.)

Members should be getting jobs and making an effort to sink roots, including recruiting fellow workers, building opposition groups or developing a periphery for socialist ideas among those around them. *How* revolutionaries orient to workplaces/rooted community work makes all the difference. We should demonstrate ourselves as the best, most dedicated activists, who can help establish strong democratic traditions. We need a serious, patient approach when it comes to criticizing leaders and activists – not attempts to rapidly "expose" them through denunciations or outsider theatrics. Generally, members of SA should first and foremost act as serious activists in the wider movement looking *to connect and build a base.*

We need a thorough balance sheet on the KCVG campaign. It has been a commendable campaign in many ways. But we have been troubled by several aspects of the approach. These include the staff-driven approach of the campaign; the drive to drop local work in favor of KCVG; and finally the idealist overall perspectives and impatient expectation of the US leadership to create a "model struggle" to act as a magical "catalyst" for the redevelopment of class struggle. Kshama and the comrades' letter reveals the KCVG crises behind the curtain, hidden from the rest of us in membership.

Mistakes and new opportunities

Lessons have to be learned from the DSA experience because there will be new opportunities for united-front work and flexible approaches to new formations. We think there were errors both in the timing *and* politics of our orientation to DSA.

SA missed the window from 2016 to 2019 when DSA was at its height and most politically open-ended. At that time, SA was in an unique position to help crystallize a broad left wing in DSA and put down a marker in that emerging and evolving movement. We could have built inroads in the union left and embryonic or emerging union opposition forces in several areas. We made our turn in late 2020, but in a sectarian and standoffish way, believing SA to be the "only force," and therefore "all the good people from DSA will come to us." Now the left of DSA has collapsed and we failed to build in its labor and youth wings, or contribute to the development of any kind of left pole. This ultimately aided SA's drift further into abstract propagandism and sectarianism.

Where the conditions exist, we need to rethink how we build toward serious broad left workers' candidates and a campaign for a mass workers/socialist party. We would echo Kshama and the comrades' quotation of Lenin: "Politics begin where the masses are, not where there are thousands, but where there are millions, that is where serious politics begin." To start we must end the denunciatory approach to left DSA candidates and electeds in the cities where they play a limited positive role in various ways in favor of patiently explaining their limitations. While critical of mistakes and setbacks, we should re-engage local electoral openings like Gaza ceasefire votes, joint student-union divestment campaigns, and continue the tax the rich orientation, Amazon Prime Day strikes, etc. We should be open to working with left elected officials despite differences, mainly pointing to the need to mobilize a new movement from below around transitional demands - for example social housing or tax the rich.

Build new international links

We urgently need to begin a process of dialogue and patient discussion with other tendencies building the marxist movement internationally including MST in Argentina (MST, as part of the left front, FIT-U, receives hundreds of thousands of votes and have a strong base in the working class and the left); the former TIDU tendency, now called Internationalist Standpoint (Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Italy, Iran, Romania, where these comrades are conducting outstanding anti-imperialist, anti-fascist, worker, environmental, and socialist feminist campaigns); Izquerda Revolucionaria (quite prominent in the left, women's and student movements in Spain), left worker-based trends in Iran, France, Italy, Brazil, Portugal; even the old CWI where it still plays a positive role; and possibly the soon-to-be ROSA-focused International of the former ISA sections in the current minority faction **in an effort to collaborate on a basic program of international solidarity campaigns, dialogue and the need for a new, revolutionary international.**

Please contact RefoundationTendencyISA@gmail.com

Signed,

Alan Jones, NYC
Joined CWI 1974. Founding member of Socialist Alternative.
Public Sector Worker and delegate AFSCME Local 375
National Committee (1986-2023). Executive Committee (1986-resigned 2021). Former IEC member of CWI (1986-2011). Attended Founding Congress of ISA/CWI (2020).

Alex Glassmacher, Boston
Joined 2017
Letter carrier NALC

Bob C., NYC
Joined 1994
Longstanding Teamster and TDU activist

Brian G., NYC
Joined 2015
Public Sector Worker and Shop Steward
Former Flatbush BC & New York City Committee

Clark Nguyen, Chicago
Joined 2015
Amazon Worker

Connor Brennan, Chicago
Joined 2020
Barista, leading organizer and delegate SBWU Illinois
Former Chicago City Committee

Dan K, NYC
Joined 2014
Public Sector Worker and Union President
Former New York Executive Committee & BO

Fran A., NYC
Joined 1986
Longstanding Teamster member.

Marianne Anderson, Chicago
Joined 2016 Public School Teacher CTU
Former Chicago City Committee

Matt Wylder, Chicago
Joined 2017
Tech worker
Former Chicago City Committee & BO.
Finance team KSC 2021

Michael Corsillo , NYC
Joined 2012
Public School Teacher and delegate MORE/UFT

Nick Wozniak, Chicago
Joined 2014
Public School Special Ed. Para. SEIU 73
Former National Committee & NC Alternate.
Former Chicago Executive Committee.

Rob Jenkins, NYC
Joined 2015
Former New York City Committee & BO

Steven Molina, NYC
Joined 2012
Former Queens BC & New York City Committee.

Theresa Powers, Chicago
Joined 2015
Public School Special Ed. Teacher CTU
Former Chicago EC. Field Team Kshama Reelection 2019.

Zachary Sampson, Boston
Joined 2020
Public Sector Worker NAGE Local 292